

What is Claimed is:

1. A hybrid network configuration, comprising:

a plurality of application platforms for sending and receiving at least one of voice and data in accordance with a first predetermined protocol;

a voice/data network for routing said voice and data between said plurality of application platforms in accordance with a second predetermined protocol; and

at least one network portal for providing said plurality of application platforms access to said voice/data network by encapsulating said voice and data in datagrams, and appending source/destination headers for routing said datagrams between said at least one network portal and said plurality of application platforms and said voice/data network irrespective of content of said voice and data encapsulated in said datagrams..

2. The hybrid network configuration of claim 1, wherein said first protocol is implemented within each of said plurality of application platforms by a physical layer for exchanging said voice and data between said plurality of application platforms and said at least one network portal using said datagrams, an application specific interface for formatting said voice and data for use by said application platforms, and a first information encapsulation layer for encapsulating said voice and data into said datagrams, appending said source/destination headers to said datagrams and transmitting said datagrams over said physical layer and for stripping said source/destination headers from said datagrams received from said physical layer and transmitting said voice and data to said application specific interface.

3. The hybrid network configuration of claim 2, wherein said first protocol is implemented within said at least one network portal by said physical layer, a network portal control interface for identifying voice and data in connection with which said network portal is capable of processing directly and alternatively re-transmitting said voice and data, and a second information encapsulation layer for encapsulating said voice and data received from said network portal control interface into said datagrams, appending said source/destination

headers to said datagrams and transmitting said datagrams over said physical layer, and for stripping said source/destination headers from said datagrams received from said physical layer and transmitting said voice and data to said network portal control interface.

5 4. The hybrid network configuration of claim 1, wherein said second protocol is implemented within said voice/data network by a physical layer for exchanging said voice and data between said voice/data network and said at least one network portal using said datagrams, an information routing layer for formatting said voice and data received from said physical layer for transmission across said voice/data network and for appending said source/destination headers to said voice and data and transmitting same over said physical layer.

10 5. The hybrid network configuration of claim 4, wherein said second protocol is implemented within said at least one network portal by said physical layer and an information encapsulation layer for encapsulating said voice and data into said datagrams, appending said source/destination headers to said datagrams received from said network portal, and transmitting said datagrams over said physical layer, and for stripping said source/destination headers from said datagrams received from said physical layer and transmitting said voice and data to said at least one network portal.

20 6. The hybrid network according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein said plurality of application platforms comprise at least one of telephones, cellular phones, wireless communication devices, PDAs, personal computers, terminals, and laptop computers.

25 7. The hybrid network according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein said at least one network portal comprises at least one of telephones, cellular phones, wireless communication devices, PDAs, personal computers, terminals, wireless receiver/transmitter base stations, and laptop computers.

30 8. The hybrid network according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein said voice/data network comprises at least one of a LAN, WAN, Internet, Intranet, PBX, Centrex, and wireless system.

9. The hybrid network according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein said physical layer comprises at least one of a wired interface or wireless interface.

10. The hybrid network according to claim 9, wherein said wired interface comprises at least one of a serial interface, parallel interface, USB interface, tip and ring interface.

11. The hybrid network according to claim 9, wherein said wireless interface comprises at least one of an infrared/IrDA interface, radio interface, and cellular interface.

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